

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Culture, Leisure and Communities**

22 September 2009

Report of the Director of Economy and Place

Tourism marketing – delivering the Autumn schedule

Summary

1. To update the Executive Member about how the Council and Make It York proposes drawing on the tourism marketing budget to work with partners and develop covid-19 safe events and experiences to encourage visitors (including residents) into the city throughout September – December 2020.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to:
 - 1) Endorse the proposed approach to supporting the City's Tourism Economy.

Reason: There are several different partners involved in delivering the city's events and experiences. The report sets out the proposed approach for supporting the City's tourism industry in the important pre-Christmas period to provide visibility and transparency as to the allocation of budget and activity by the Council and Make It York for Tourism support.

- 2) Approve the outline event and experience programme

Reason: Funding provided by the council for the tourism marketing plan will deliver a series of themed events and experiences delivered by partners. The Executive member is asked to approve proposals for events and experiences and delegate to the Corporate Director of Economy and Place agreement of scope to deliver the proposed events programme.

- 2) To approve the use of the remaining £34,500 budget from the Leeds City Region business rates pilot funded York Narrative project to supplement the marketing strategy budget to fund the programme of events and experiences and delegate to the Corporate Director of Economy and Place the final allocation of funding and budget.

Background

3. On 23 July 2020, Executive approved the council's Recovery and Renewal Strategy which included Annex 4 the Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s141121/Annex%204%20-%20Tourism%20marketing%20strategy.pdf>.
4. To support delivery of the Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy, a more detailed Marketing Plan including key performance indicators has been developed. Produced by Make It York and CYC in consultation with sector representatives including Business Improvement District (BID), Hospitality Association York (HAY), Indie York, Retail Forum, York Museums Trust, Civic Trust, York Archaeological Trust, York Minster, National Railway Museum and English Heritage. The plan provides more detail about the experiences, events and marketing throughout the autumn
<https://www.makeityork.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/York-Tourism-Recovery-Marketing-Strategy.pdf>
5. The Tourism Marketing Plan proposed in this report was developed in consultation with the CYC Executive Economic Recovery Group (EERG) during early August 2020. Based on this consultation and the emerging marketing plan, an emergency officer decision was taken to support the York Food Festival which needed early funding approval to deliver the event in a timely manner. In addition to this decision, several actions have also begun to deliver the Marketing Plan.
6. To increase the visibility of the Marketing Plan has formally launched by Make It York in consultation with the Executive member and will be presented to the sector at Make It York's in November, aiming to encourage different businesses to get involved.

Marketing activities

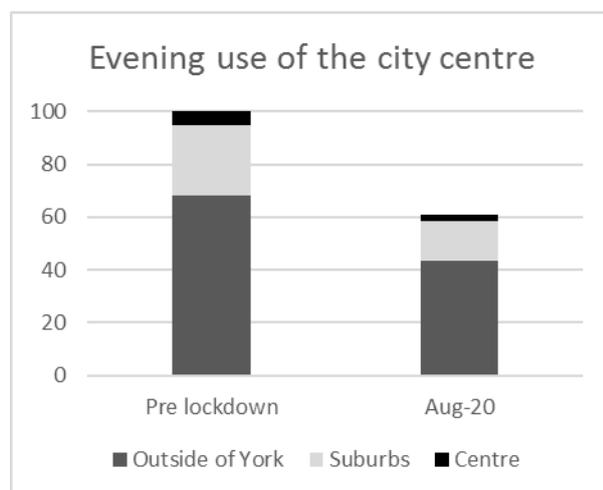
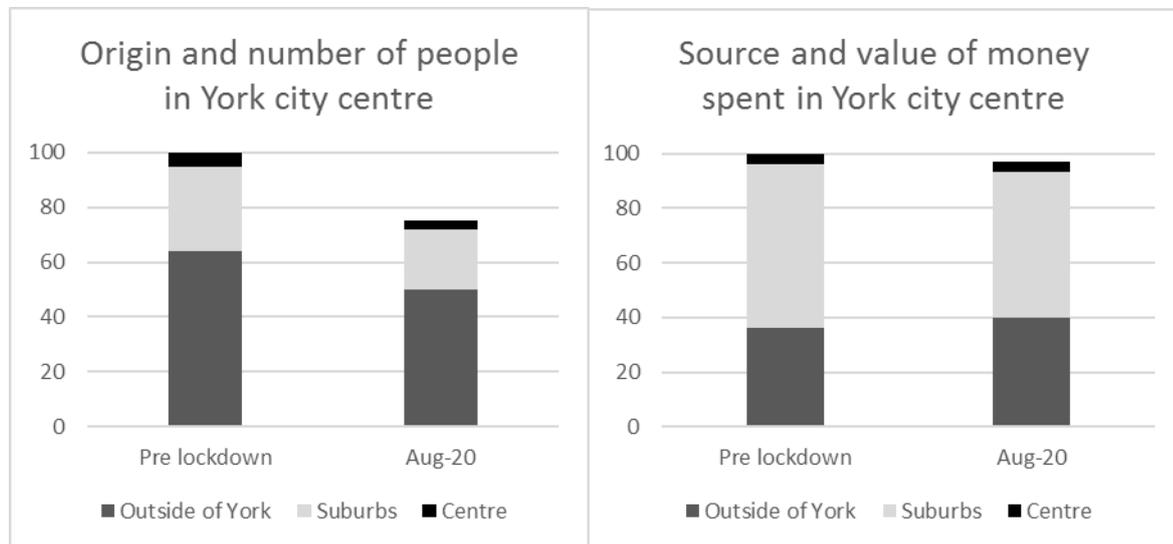
7. The strategy was approved in July and since then different activities have taken place to encourage people to return to the city.

8. In addition to their usual activities, Make It York has delivered key marketing activities from the council-funded tourism marketing plan:
 - a. Created and promoted a dedicated section of the Visit York website to promote the safety of the city. The 'Feel at Home in York' hub was complemented by the new 'What's open in York' page has had 28,049 page views since it went live on 17 June and 9,963 since the start of August. Footfall is around 70-75% of this time last year.
<https://www.visityork.org/explore/feel-at-home-in-york>
 - b. The Keyworker Celebration took place in the first week of August, to coincide with Yorkshire Day on 1 August. Aiming to thank the city's key workers, 35 businesses provided unique offers for keyworkers, with 3 different attractions providing unique experiences. The hashtag reached 165k people, a dedicated webpage had 7k views and on launch day (1 August) footfall was up by 13.9% of the previous week (29,384 visitors). <https://www.visityork.org/whats-on/key-workers-celebration>
 - c. A new video promoting the best of York has launched. To date the video has had over 153k views across social media platforms, with a reach of over 289k people who had it presented to them on their channels– with many residents and York-based businesses proudly sharing with their own audiences
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPXe2ymMaVs>
9. Throughout July and August, both the council and Visit York promoted to residents the measures being take to safely maintain social distancing to help build confidence to return to the city centre. The council has:
 - a. Launched the *Let's be York* campaign with partner and business packs, social media, posters and adverts and an animation which has been viewed 147k times with more than 2.3k engagements. Excluding the video, collectively the *Let's be York* social media campaign has reached 285k with engagement of more than 10.2k.
<https://www.york.gov.uk/LetsBeYork>
 - b. Ensured "Shop local" has been a theme of regular press releases, with local shopping experiences included in the September issue of *Our City*, the council's resident newsletter. For example,
<https://www.york.gov.uk/news/article/304/stay-safe-and-shop-local>

- c. Launched the York Kind social media campaign to show how York independent businesses adapted to support customers safe return. York Kind/reopen for business reached over 115k with over 3.7k engagements and many local businesses sharing the posts.
<https://www.york.gov.uk/YorkKind>
10. Throughout the autumn, different marketing activities have been booked or are under discussion:
 - a. Paid advertising: Make It York has booked a three month advertising package with Classic FM North, targeted advertising for residents in York Mumbler and Little Vikings, Yorkshire Living and Metro UK, together with the York Press
 - b. Digital marketing: boosted digital campaign has been booked together with targeted digital PR aimed at family, travel, food and heritage audiences
 - c. Media trips: a series of PR travel features with the national and regional media is planned to take place throughout September
 - d. What's on guide: a refreshed what's on guide will be developed and delivered by York Mix and launch mid September.
11. Visit York continues to push out messaging via their own channels, including social media, blog posts, full e-newsletter programme including weekly '7 days' resident e-news and monthly consumer e-news together with business to business member communications including monthly newsletters, member toolkits, and VYBiz social media to support tourism member businesses. The ongoing public relations activity continues and implementation of the York and Beyond campaign with the North York Moors in underway.
12. To encourage the tourist, leisure and retail sector to develop offers that support and enhance the plans described in the marketing plan, Make It York launched the Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy and plan to seek feedback and initiate a discussion about how to get involved w/c 7 September 2020. <https://www.makeityork.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/York-Tourism-Recovery-Marketing-Strategy.pdf> . This plan was published on the MIY website and acts as a reference point for activities taking place between August and December 2020. It will be presented to the sector in November.

Visitor Intelligence and Insightⁱ

13. Springboard camera counts show that footfall has returned to around 70% of expected levels. Measures from elsewhere – most notably the High Street Recovery tracker published by Centre for Cities¹ - show that footfall is at around 75% of normal and that the amount of money being spent in our city centre is very close to 100%. Anecdotally, trade is variable from business to business with some doing very well and others struggling to trade at sustainable levels.
14. While the proportions have remained much the same in terms of visitors with two thirds coming from outside of York, the spending power of visitors has been key in keeping money coming in through the tills.



¹ <https://www.centreforcities.org/data/high-streets-recovery-tracker/>

15. The evening figures above show that our nighttime economy is still active, but the number of residents choosing to come into town after 7pm has halved, with the early evening market at around 60% of pre lockdown.
16. The sector has expressed concern that early evening (4-9pm) post school summer holidays is likely to see a dramatic drop in numbers. It is anticipated this is likely to happen after September that traditionally has benefitted from the older staycation market.
17. The latest Tourism statistics from Visit York cover July 2020², the first month in which hotels and attractions were allowed to reopen. Numbers were significantly down for all indicators, with room occupancy at 26% and the average rate charged per room showing significant discounting at £78.28. While hotels are now open again, the requirements of social distancing and enhanced hygiene mean that room occupancy will inevitably be lower than previous years.
18. STR³, who report on occupancy in the larger chains, suggest that York's occupancy rate has been at 75% since the end of July, with the city benefitting from the staycation market alongside Blackpool, Bath, and other smaller leisure destinations. In addition, York has been named number one city for staycations by Travel Lodge research, with Edinburgh and London number two and three.
19. More visitor insight will be available from Make It York in September to help better understand different audience's motivations for visiting York. In addition, the first Our Big Conversation report will be available that asked residents throughout August whether they feel confident in the safety measures put in place. Initial findings of Our Big Conversation together with recommendations has been published as part of the 9 September Outbreak Management Advisory Board
https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s142053/Item%204.%20Outbreak%20board%20presentation_090920.pdf.
20. Early indications suggest that although the city centre is benefiting from more visitors, residents could be further encouraged to return, shop local and support the city's attractions, leisure and hospitality sectors. This, together with continued uncertainty about the autumn period and likely impact of covid19, means a more focused effort in encouraging visitors, particularly residents, to spend time in the centre would better support the tourism sector.

² <https://www.visitork.org/members/about-us/research-and-statistics/latest-tourism-intelligence>

³ <https://str.com/data-insights-blog/video-united-kingdom-performance-results-july-27-august-2>

Funding

21. In July, Executive agreed a spend of £100k to spend on tourism marketing. A breakdown of the budget is in Annex A.
22. However, the above insight, coupled with insight from Visit Britain, indicates that families in particular are looking for staycation experiences. In addition, the normal commercial events that take place in the City and act as a staycation attractor with support from a variety of partners such as the food festival will not take place without some financial support.
23. Therefore, to deliver an effective Autumn season it is proposed to divert the remaining £34,500 budget from the Leeds City Region funded York Narrative project to supplement the Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy budget and thereby deliver family focused experiences that will encourage families to stay longer in the city. By commissioning an experience that is visually appealing and inspires viewers to share on social media, we will also amplify marketing across visitors' own channels.
24. This additional budget would help fund small commissions to partners to develop experiences that act as a draw for visitors. In some cases, the budget would underwrite partner's risk with a relationship arrangement that would off-set costs should the partner make a profit, in some cases the commission would create new, free content only. Experiences might be installations or events.
25. It had been proposed that the remaining York Narrative budget would deliver business to business engagement to support non-tourist facing businesses embed a consistent way to promote both York and their organisation, increasing visibility of our non-tourism sectors and supporting our economic and skills agenda to promote higher paying roles.
26. Given the impact of COVID19 it is clear that our priority is to provide the best environment for our tourist sector to survive and by drawing higher spending visitors to the city we aim to mitigate some of the negative impacts of COVID19.

Proposed approach to deliver events and experiences

27. At the heart of the Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy sits a themed campaign programme, which celebrates the very best that York and Yorkshire has to offer. These themes are to create strong visual content

that create an emotional connection to repeatedly draw people into the city.

28. Events and experiences will be designed to draw visitors to the city to increase footfall and spend, whilst creating visual moments that encourage visitors to share photos or videos across their networks, with visitors then acting as positive advocates to promote the city and further increase footfall.

Process

29. MIY have/will commission partners to deliver events that meet the below objectives:
- a. Deliver an experience/event that draws residents/ visitors to spend time and money in the centre, or move through the city including the centre
 - b. Create strong visual content that encourages visitors and residents to promote the city via their own social media networks.
 - c. Avoid creating crowds/reduced social distancing with limited dwell time and adhere to public health and SAG safety precautions advice
 - d. Aim to schedule activity to take place in the early evening 4-9pm
30. Support funding will be provided from the council and partners can seek sponsorship to extend / deliver the event/experience. Any support will be on an open book basis and should partner events make a surplus, the council will claw back support funding. It is proposed the budget is allocated from the increased Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy budget with an indicative allocation as set out below:

Event/experience	£
Early evening installation	10,000
Taste of York	12,000
Indie York trail support (September/ October half term)	3,000
Light & Dark commission	12,500
Light & Dark support for business	5,000
York at Christmas	12,000

31. There are three different approaches to select partners:

- Proactive approach: MIY will proactively approach partners who have delivered successful events/experiences pre-covid and invite them to provide a proposal for a similar event/experience, adapting their plans in

light of covid-19 restrictions/safety precautions and current visitor insight, meeting the above objectives.

- Reactive approach: MIY will respond to experienced partner proposals who have recognised an opportunity to develop an event/experience that would support the tourism recovery marketing plan. These partners draw on their established networks in the city and respond to visitor insight, whilst recognising the safety precautions covid-19 requires.
- Open competition: Hold an open competition inviting new and existing partners/suppliers who have demonstrated an experience in delivering destination experiences/events to seek new and exciting ideas that appeal to residents and visitors alike, meeting the above objectives.

Governance

32. To govern this campaign and draw on sector insight and expertise, it is recommended that the plan is governed by the below:
 - A reinvigorated Tourism Advisory Board, serviced by MIY and comprised of representatives from the attractions, hospitality, leisure, culture, and retail, to steer delivery of the marketing plan (over the next few months).
 - An attractions communications lead group is convened to provide sector insight and intelligence, share data and inform next steps. This group will also help extend the offer for each of the themes (and progress planning 2021 marketing activities).
 - A council / MIY officer led task and finish group will meet regularly to review progress and current footfall/car parking/spend data. This meeting will review the impact of marketing to adapt future plans if necessary and seek public health advice when required.
33. Beyond this shorter-term campaign, a renewed Tourism Strategy will be developed over the coming year, taking a broader view of the development of the sector and its impact and contribution to the city. The governance arrangements for this longer-term work will be the subject of a paper at a future decision session.

Theme proposals

34. The themes fit into a refreshed Only in York campaign. Each theme's experience/events are at different stages of development, listed below:
- a. Best of York: Harnessing civic pride and celebrating all York has introduced to the region, country and the world.
 - b. Taste of York: throughout September-w/c 12 October, showcasing the incredible food and drink offer in the city. Experiences are now underway due to the tight timescales
 - c. Light and dark: Blending history and art to light up our built environment, provide a draw for residents, celebrate our heritage and explore the shadows.
 - d. York at Christmas: A proposal to deliver a York Christmas experience will be developed to complement the Christmas market proposal. The proposal will be discussed at the Tourism Advisory Board and subject to Public Health and SAG approval, proposals (with safety measures in place) will be presented at a future relevant executive member decision session. Market costs are not covered by this budget.

Consultation

The Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy has been developed by Make It York and CYC in consultation with sector representatives including Business Improvement District (BID), Hospitality Association York (HAY), Indie York, Retail Forum, York Museums Trust, York Archaeological Trust, York Minster, National Railway Museum and English Heritage, together with insight from the sector round tables.

Analysis

35. Advantage: By progressing the proposals, MIY will be able to stand apart from competing heritage cities and work with partners to create memorable and inspirational experiences, attracting repeat visitors to stay in the city, whilst meeting social distancing and avoiding creating large crowds. In addition, by ensuring experiences highlight the hidden gems and unique history of York, we will build resident pride in the city and the city centre.

36. Disadvantage: There is a need to balance the needs of the economy with creating events/experiences that have broad appeal. The Tourism Recovery Marketing Strategy aims to help the city quickly recover whilst recognising social distancing. This necessitates a different approach to creating experiences which encourage repeat visitors to glance at/admire installations/experiences that actively encourage walk-past rather than lingering in one place, with mass crowds now a thing of the past.

Council Plan

2. This proposal contributes to the one year economic recovery strategy, which in turn contributes to the Council Plan priorities including supporting residents have access to cultural activities, and supporting an inclusive economy.

Implications

- **Financial** The Recovery budget and LCR business rates pilot have provided funding. No additional funding is required. A breakdown of the budget is in annex A.
- **Human Resources (HR)** None – the activity is delivered by MIY and partners.
- **Equalities** an equality impact assessment will be completed for each event/experience
- **Legal** none
- **Crime and Disorder** none
- **Information Technology (IT)** none
- **Property** none
- **Other**
MIY have been involved throughout the development of this proposal and payment will be made direct to their suppliers.

Risk Management

37. Risks at this stage include:

a. Increase in cases / local lockdown prevents events taking place: As a worst-case scenario, events may be cancelled at short notice dependent on government and public health guidance. Events will always adhere to and reflect the current public health guidance, with detailed risk assessments in advance, together with SAG advice. Support funding will

not be recoverable if events are cancelled due to Covid Lockdowns where funds have been committed and costs incurred.

- b. Residents may not return to the city – the events programme aims to build resident pride in the city, with hidden gems or new experiences encouraging repeat visits. Insight demonstrates that residents will return to the city if there is an experience that interests them and by creating unique experiences, it is anticipated these will appeal to residents.
- c. Unsustainable increase in visitors (the city feels unsafe) – The autumn’s early evening period is typically quieter and as a result additional visitors in this period will feel more like a typical day than an extra busy day. Media messaging prior to the event will be developed to ensure appropriate messaging to visitors to help manage numbers.
- d. Fear the city is unsafe – the experiences will need to meet Public Health and SAG advice to go ahead, demonstrating how they are avoiding creating crowds and supporting social distancing. Experiences will be cancelled if there is any concern.

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Neil Ferris
Director of Economy and Place

Report **Date** 14/09/2020
Approved

Specialist Implications Officer(s) List information for all

Simon Brereton (Economic Development Strategy), Head of Economic Development
Helen Apsey (Head of Culture, Wellbeing, Communications and Marketing)
Make It York

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all **All**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Annex A: Budget

Annex A

Tourist marketing plan budget

Theme	Activity	Task	Cost
Keyworker celebration	Photography	Photographer for keyworkers/ Yorkshire Day	£250
	Advertising	Local media	£493
Best of York	Event	Bunting installation for Yorkshire Day	£924
	Event	Cherry picker for bunting installation	£109
	Photography	strong visual content to repurpose in social/print ads	£250
	Digital advertising	Local family digital sites	£750
	Digital campaign	boosted video	£2,500
	Advertising	Regional media	£1,000
	Video	A place of inspiration (refreshed for October)	£5,025
Early evening programme	Photography	strong visual content to repurpose in social/print ads	£250
	Event	Early evening installation	£10,000
	Advertising	Local media	£750
	Digital advertising	boosted social	£500
Taste of York	Advertising	Regional/national advertising / listings (3 month campaign)	£9,000
	Photography	strong visual content to repurpose in social/print ads	£250
	event	Taste of York	£12,000
	Advertising	Regional radio (3 month campaign)	£8,375
	Event digital advertising	Indie York trail support digital engagement campaign	£3,000 £7,500
Light and Dark	Event	Light and Dark commission	£12,500
	Photography	strong visual content to repurpose in social/print ads	£0
	Advertising	national media	£10,000
	Digital campaign	boosted, engagement campaign	£5,000
	Event	Light and Dark support for businesses	£5,000
York Christmas	Advertising	national media	£10,000
	Event	York Christmas/Christmas market	£12,000
Strategy-wide	Listings	Listings/ what's on guide	£10,000
	monitoring	equivalent to Visit Britain sentiment tracker x 3 waves	£7,000
		Total spend	£134,426

Budget

CYC tourist marketing	£100,000
CYC York Narrative	£34,500
	£134,500

ⁱ Data presented in the Quarterly Economic Update (22 September 2020)